

OPERATIONS GROUP FILE

BBC →

NOTES OF INTERDEPARTMENTAL MEETING

12TH APRIL, 1979

General

1. MDXB spoke of the financial consequences for External Services of the recent Phase 4 pay settlement which, together with the fact that the back-dated element would have to be paid for out of this year's funds (as would the back-dating of the engineering regrading whenever that was agreed), would result in the Treasury's Cash Limits for 1979/80 being considerably exceeded. It was idle to speculate how ministers in a new Government would react.
2. Agreement had just been reached with the FCO on the phasing of a twenty million pound capital programme to improve the availability of External broadcasting. Discussions about the future of some of the vernacular services had been put on ice until after the Election.
3. On newspaper reimbursement, MDXB said that reasons of equity had made it necessary for External Services to agree that a large number of Bush House staff, including programme assistants working on current affairs, should be eligible to claim. Final lists of eligible posts were still being discussed with the Unions in Bush. I said that there had never been any doubt in my mind that all editors and English and foreign language monitors at Caversham had to be included, and that the Unions here agreed with this view. We were now waiting for CAXB to issue an administrative instruction on how to process claims etc.

Local

4. Efforts to obtain additional funds for Persian monitoring and for the second post in Lilongwe had so far proved unsuccessful, largely, it seemed, because of insuperable administrative difficulties. It looked as if the best hope was that we should include a bid for the extra money in our estimates for next year, with FCO and MOD backing. Meanwhile, the Persian team was being strengthened on a temporary basis.
5. Income from sales to news agencies and of RDI had increased considerably during the past year. There had been a slight decline in the number of SWB subscribers. Prices for all items would be further increased this year, roughly in line with the present inflation rate. Agreement had been reached to sell to the West German Agency DDF a fairly comprehensive selection from the news file for £15000 per annum, subject to a three month preliminary trial.
6. Various projects were in hand to mark the Service's 40th Anniversary next August including: a brief survey of the Service's history by Ramon Silva, to be produced by Publishing; a glossy illustrated booklet which would have a fairly durable value as a handout to be produced by External Services' Publicity; and a festivity of two yet to be decided upon.

John Rae
Head of Monitoring Service

17th April 1979
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